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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
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Forty-sixth session

UNHCR'S INSPECTION AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Addendum 1 - Inspection Activities

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The creation of a post of Director, Inspection and Evaluation Service (the Inspector) was approved by the Executive Committee during its forty-fifth session in October 1994 (A/AC.96/839,para.24 (m)). First proposed at the 19 May 1993 meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (EC/1993/SC.2/CRP.9), the Service was to "provide the High Commissioner with an additional management tool which is flexible, independent, and directly responsible to her." The Inspection and Evaluation Service became operational in March 1995.

2. As stated in the proposal, the Inspection and Evaluation Service is to undertake "rigorous and comprehensive reviews of UNHCR's operational activities and their impact in given countries and regions, focusing particularly on those factors, both internal and external to the organization, deemed essential to the effective and efficient achievement of organizational objectives". The Inspector will also review issues that had not been previously systematically addressed, such as the overall quality of UNHCR's representation, and the living and working environment of UNHCR personnel, in particular staff morale and security. While focusing primarily on operations, the Service may also review entities at Headquarters to assess their effectiveness in providing support to the field.

3. The newly formed service undertook three inspection exercises -- in Nepal, Cameroon and Nigeria -- during late spring and summer 1995. Four additional inspection exercises are planned to take place before the end of the year. As for the recently completed exercises, they will address both policy and programme issues and UNHCR's performance and accountability.

II. INSPECTION EXERCISES UNDERTAKEN IN 1995

A. UNHCR programme in Nepal

4. The absence of foreseeable durable solutions in the near future for the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal prompted the Inspector to undertake a review of UNHCR's presence and activities there. Since 1990, the Office has assisted in Nepal some 87,000 Bhutanese refugees of ethnic Nepali origin who fled Bhutan. In addition, UNHCR assists asylum-seekers who transit Nepal. The yearly volume of UNHCR project activities on behalf of Bhutanese refugees amounts to over $ 5 million, and that for asylum-seekers transiting Nepal amounts to some $ 200,000.

5. The Inspector recommended that UNHCR should continue interceding with Nepal and Bhutan with the aim of reaching an agreement between the two countries conducive to a solution for the Bhutanese refugees. Furthermore, the report noted that the Office should consider soliciting the support of a third party, including selected internationally prominent figures, to further stimulate dialogue between the parties.

6. The report observed that while reaching an agreement permitting a solution for the Bhutanese refugees will require more time and effort, local integration as a solution may not be possible in the interim. The review also noted that UNHCR has endeavoured to promote self-help activities among the refugee communities. In addition to encouraging income-generation schemes, it recently began shifting some of the project management responsibilities to the refugees. It has also encouraged interdependence between camps and neighbouring villages through relocating some of the services within national structures. The Inspector recommended that this policy be continued.

7. With a view to facilitating repatriation negotiations, UNHCR should also, the Inspector noted, develop detailed contingency plans for such options as limited voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in a neighbouring country. Contingency planning should involve international development agencies and encourage the targeting of programmes at refugee settlement areas.

8. Regarding protection issues, the review observed that during the first months of 1995 a number of asylum-seekers transiting Nepal have reportedly been deported. The Inspector endorsed the decision taken by the Regional Bureau for Asia and Oceania to assign a roving Protection Officer to cover the northern regions of Nepal.

9. Upon consultation with the representatives of all of UNHCR's implementing partners in Nepal in the course of the mission, the Inspector recommended that local training to familiarize non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with UNHCR's mandate

and procedures should be systematically undertaken. Despite long traditions of cooperation, many field staff of major implementing partners in the Nepal programme do not appear to understand fully the specificities of UNHCR's mandate or its programme planning and management procedures. Nonetheless, overall coordination with governmental and non-governmental agencies represented in Nepal was deemed satisfactory.

10. The mission also reviewed organizational and staffing issues. Upon detailed review, the project and administrative management performances of UNHCR offices in Nepal were found to be highly satisfactory. The competence of the Office's expatriate and national staff combined with management control routines have ensured the efficient programming and delivery of assistance to the refugees. In the course of visits to the camp areas, the Inspector conferred with refugees, government workers as well as with staff of NGOs and UNHCR's implementing partners. The review concluded that the present staffing structure of UNHCR in Nepal is adequate and does not require major modifications. Nonetheless, the Inspector recommended that due attention be given to the harsh working and living conditions in the camp areas and that concrete steps be taken to relieve the hardship and isolation of staff there.

B. UNHCR programme in Nigeria

11. The principal objectives of the inspection mission to Nigeria were to look into the future of this long-established office in view of the transfer of the seat of Government from Lagos to Abuja, and to rationalize current assistance activities. The report focused on three main issues: UNHCR representation, durable solutions and staffing.

12. With regard to UNHCR representation, it was recommended that, in accordance with the Nigerian Government's request to all diplomatic missions and international organizations, UNHCR plan a complete transfer of its Branch Office from Lagos to Abuja by the end of 1996. Preliminary discussions with government counterparts, including the identification of temporary premises for UNHCR in the new capital, took place during the Inspector's mission.

13. In line with UNHCR's effort to encourage and support the development and maintenance of national eligibility procedures, the Inspector recommended that Branch Office Lagos, in collaboration with the Division of International Protection, should organize further training for the Eligibility Commission of Nigeria.

14. As in all UNHCR's operations, voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution for refugees in Nigeria. The situation in Liberia, the country of origin of most of those in the current caseload, is now moving towards a political solution which might permit the voluntary return of refugees throughout West Africa in the near future. Meanwhile, in view of the generosity of the Nigerian Government to refugees on its territory, and the extent to which Liberian refugees in the country have now achieved self-sufficiency, the Inspector concluded that assistance to those

remaining in Oru camp should be phased out by the end of 1996. During the intervening year, UNHCR should encourage camp residents to engage in agricultural activities on land provided by the Government, or to initiate other income-generating activities in or outside the camp, according to their skills.

15. With regard to the urban caseload in Nigeria, Lagos (as a major metropolis in West Africa) inevitably attracts refugees from many parts of Africa as well as other parts of the world. Some are of urban origin and may possess the skills required to find a means to survive in the city, while others, with a rural background, are unable to cope with the highly competitive environment. UNHCR assistance to urban refugees in Lagos has tended to be self-perpetuating, acting as a pull factor to others from further and further afield. In the light of this unsatisfactory situation, the Inspector has recommended that existing assistance activities in Lagos be rationalized, oriented towards durable solutions and, where possible, moved to other parts of the country. This change in direction will necessitate the identification of an operational partner in Lagos to take over remaining assistance activities following UNHCR's move to Abuja; and, for those refugees for whom voluntary repatriation is not yet an option, the identification of educational, training and employment possibilities, in urban and rural centres outside Lagos. The Inspector noted that in view of the open approach of the Nigerian Government towards refugees, permitting freedom of movement and access to work, there is normally little need for resettlement as a durable solution, other than for exceptional security or vulnerable cases.

16. In order to respond more effectively to the current demands on UNHCR in Nigeria, the Inspector also made recommendations for the modification of the office staffing in 1996, with a greater focus on administration and programme aspects, and for further changes for 1997, following the transfer of the Branch Office to Abuja. It is anticipated that by this stage. UNHCR will have substantially reduced its staffing level in Nigeria, following the phasing down of residual protection and assistance activities and hand-over to implementing partners prior to the move. In view of the important political and diplomatic role envisaged for UNHCR in Abuja, however, the Office will continue to be headed by a senior international officer.

C. UNHCR programme in Cameroon

17. Cameroon has long provided asylum for refugees from neighbouring countries, notably Chad. With a gradual return to normality in their country of origin, Chadian refugees in Cameroon have been returning voluntarily, and few remain on UNHCR assistance. One of the main objectives of the inspection mission, therefore, was to look at UNHCR's future role in Cameroon. The Inspector endorsed the Regional Bureau for Africa's recent decision to modify the status of the UNHCR presence in Cameroon to that of a Liaison Office, and recommended that the situation be further assessed in the first half of 1997. With regard to the recent and continuing influx of Rwandans (and to a lesser degree, Burundians) into Cameroon, the Inspector concluded that this is not on a sufficiently large scale to justify any major change in our current operations. He recommended that the situation be clarified by the establishment of a regional policy on the secondary movement of Rwandans and Burundians (see below).

18. Foremost among UNHCR's tasks in Cameroon in the immediate future, according to the Inspector, was support for the Government in its progress towards the establishment of national refugee legislation, and the setting up of eligibility procedures. A recent joint Canadian Government/UNHCR training initiative in Cameroon had been well received by the Government, and the Inspector recommended further interventions of this nature.

19. In light of the generosity of the Government of Cameroon in providing extensive agricultural land to Chadian refugees in the northern settlement at Poli-Faro, and the high rate of self-sufficiency among the remaining caseload, the Inspector endorsed the Regional Bureau for Africa's planned phase-out of UNHCR's food assistance to the camp by January 1996. The Inspector further recommended that the hand-over of essential services (education, health, water supply) to the Cameroonian authorities be completed by the end of 1996. Meanwhile, efforts should be made to promote the voluntary return of most of those in this residual caseload.

20. The growing number of spontaneously arriving asylum-seekers from Rwanda (and to a lesser degree, Burundi) in Cameroon since May 1994 has resulted in UNHCR expanding its urban assistance programme in Yaoundé. Unfortunately, the availability of assistance, particularly for secondary and tertiary education, has proved to be a pull factor and the numbers arriving and seeking UNHCR assistance continue to increase. The Inspector has therefore proposed that the Regional Bureau for Africa, in consultation with the Division of International Protection, should, without delay, elaborate a comprehensive regional policy for the protection of and assistance to Rwandan asylum-seekers outside the immediate neighbouring countries of Rwanda. One element in such a comprehensive regional policy would necessarily be a review and rationalization of currently disparate activities with regard to the education of Rwandan refugees and asylum-seekers in different asylum countries.

21. Other issues looked at by the Inspector during his mission to Cameroon included a review of staffing levels and distribution of the workload in Liaison Office Yaoundé, staff living conditions, and the disposal of non-expendable property remaining after the closure of the sub-office in Garoua. With regard to staffing levels, it was noted that considerable reductions were already made following the closure of the Garoua office in 1992 and the Inspector concluded that current staffing levels at Liaison Office Yaounde are appropriate in view of the actual workload. He proposed, however, that staffing levels be reviewed again in 1997.